6:Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahanni ND12
Upper Liard

Coast Range. Even in 1945 mild hostility characterized Tahltan-Kaska relations and young men of the former group boasted of their ancestors successfully fighting the Kaska. Other informants corroborated the fact of war between the two groups. Nobody recalled trouble with the Bear Lake Sekani. The upper Liard River people regarded the Etca'otena of the Fort Nelson River as stupid and almost inhuman but fighting with them could not be recalled.* 648

Large-scale aggression did not occur frequently and there existed no value on fighting for its own sake. War was defensive in theory, a means of subduing bad or potentially dangerous people. Women felt dismay when preparations for hostility began and some sought, with only rare success, to keep their men from battle. Both sexes equally welcomed the resumption of peace. Typically a war party originated in a situation like the following: A man, visiting the camp of a stranger, saw a scalp which he suspected belonged to one of his relatives. The traveler returned to his own country and discovered who was missing. If several people had not been heard of for a long time the original surmise became fact. Driven by anger, the man began hostilities by killing a woman who had originally belonged to the enemy group. In front of his companions he displayed a knife, blade upperment, and moved it in a semicircle as a gesture of hostility. "I'm still hungry," he would say. Then those people prepared to attack the enemy. The desire to steal women took its place alongside revenge as an auxiliary motive for aggression. The wish for prestige played little part in promoting aboriginal warfare. 721

A war leader was not identical with the band's headman. Sometimes the expedition also included a shaman who worked secretly against the enemy. While the war chief acted as "boss" of the war party he had no power to inflict corporal punishment. At most he could order a disobedient member to quit the group. Several microcosmic groups probably provided recruits for a military expedition, so that the leader assumed the proportions of a true political authority. The expedition itself contained two divisions, young men about 19 or 20 years old, who packed the goods, and warriors, averaging about 30 years of age, who did the actual fighting. Women never directly participated in aggressive warfare but they sometimes visited the enemy camp to act as spies. Such an envoy might return to tearfully beg that the intended victims be spared. 701

Preparatory to fighting men made new knives, lances, fitted with stone or caribou horn blades, and many arrows. Each warrior provided himself with two bows in the event that one should break. In addition the men donned bear skin armor in the form of a sleeveless coat that reached to the knees. This was made from hides tanned with the hair on and worn with the hair out. Magical significance is probable, since among the Indians the bear enjoyed a reputation for his fierceness. Over his head the warrior carried, far exposed, a caribou-skin helmet lined with birch bark. Sometimes headgear included a visor covering the whole face and provided with holes for vision.* Helmets [411] 714 [658]

* For counter attitudes among the Slave, see Honigmann, *Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Nelson Slave* (1946), 73-75.

* Thick armor consisted of long tunics made with two or three thicknesses of hide or hide reinforced with wooden slats. Tribal-end jackets were used by the Chilkat and helmets of solid wood with visors held in the teeth. Jenness, *Indians of Canada* (1932), 180; Drucker, *Culture Element Distribution: XXVI, Northwest Coast* (1950), 161.

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Dease River

from beating to killing. Injuries inflicted in quarrels demanded settlement by payment. To avoid blood vengeance in the event of murder the murder's family might accumulate many valuables, like skins, robes, and clothing, for presentation to the victim's kin. Even intertribal wars with the Tahltan could sometimes be avoided by offering valuables. A cannibal found himself banished from the community for as long as two years. Ostracism also greeted a couple guilty of incest, an offense covering sexual relations between members of a common moiety. Magical retribution further promised to hasten the death of such people.* A folk tale explains that men were likely to find their sisters sexually attractive because of an incident that had occurred very long ago. There once lived a man who left his two wives (they were sisters) and his children, killed his brother-in-law, and copulated with his widowed sister. The deserted wives killed the incestuous couple with the approval of the husband's brother, who said, "My brother did evil and acted like a dog."* An adulterous wife suffered a beating but a man had to be careful not to inflict serious injury or his behavior would constitute a crime punishable by the parents-in-law, who might demand an indemnity. A woman could divorce a philandering husband. The extent to which marital jealousy was developed is suggested in the tale of "The Deserted Woman."* A woman became suspected of infidelity because she offered her husband grease that she had found. The man, believing that the grease represented payment from a lover, burned his wife's clothing and tools and deserted her, expecting that she would die of cold and starvation. She managed to survive until two brothers discovered and married her. Subsequently she refused to return to her cruel husband. Illegitimacy disgraced both a mother and, later, the child.

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Intergroup attitudes are reflected in the Nahani fear. The term designates a "bad Indian," who is given to lurking in the bush as he waits for an opportunity to steal girls. Victims of such an attack were never recovered but were taken to the abductor's tribe to become his wives. Dease River informants asserted as confidently as upper Liard River speakers that a Nahani represented a flesh and blood Indian rather than a supernatural being. The chronic insecurity marking intertribal relations sometimes exploded into war, resentment over encroachment of territories by foreigners being a common motive for fighting.* Many engagements were recalled between the Kaska and Tahltan. Ideally the fighting began when an enemy party raided a Kaska encampment, stealing women and killing the men. Invariably relatives or friends discovered the crime and

* George Adolf reported that the Tahltan punished incest by death. On one occasion a guilty couple fled from their band and succeeded a small salmon creek. Here, surrounded by an abundance of food, they raised two children before their people discovered them and killed the whole family.

* Teit, *Kaska Tales* (1917), 439-440.

* Teit, *Kaska Tales* (1917), 435-437.

* Morice speaks of feuds over hunting grounds dividing the Tahltan and Kaska. (Morice, *Notes and Tales Language* [1905-1908], 110.) The entry of white trappers into the Cassiar also met with resentment. "The Cassiar Indians have the greatest objection to white men trapping on their own account in their country; gold dust they can take as much as they like, but the fur is the Indian's equivalent for gold and must be left for the Indian. They are very firm on this point—so much so that a couple of white men who were trapping on the Liard some years ago were killed by the Indians because they refused to let the fur alone." Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest* (1896), 112.

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Tsetsaut

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set out to avenge the deaths. The retaliatory party also captured women, children, and occasionally robes and arrows. Children were never killed. Shields and arrows could not be recalled.* Weapons included clubs, bows, and arrows. Sometimes both sides agreed to the cessation of hostilities by raising both hands over the head and then bringing them together again in front of the body as in prayer. Wars were followed by feasts and dancing.

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Tsetsaut. At Fort Nelson in 1941 an old Kaska woman, Widow Matsit, gave a somewhat ethnocentric account of fighting between Kaska and Cree Indians. It seems likely that she belonged to the Tsetsaut division and, because her story has not previously been printed, it is given here.*

This fellow was alone in the bush. It was spring. While he was alone, the Cree Indians captured him and his wife together. They took both of them away to the Cree people's country in the south. They never let the men but only the women and they also kept them apart. Each chance she had the women slipped a little food to her husband, the little she could lay her hands on. Whenever the party pulled out of a camp they gave the man the big heavy packs to carry. He had to do it or he killed. Finally, when they arrived in a strange country, they turned the woman's husband loose. His wife said, "You don't have to go back where you came from. Just stay here but keep off the trail. I'll always have some food and I'll leave some. In that way you'll have food." He kept off the trail but followed the group through the brush. When they made camp he hid. Always when he came to the camp after they had left he found that his wife had left some food for him. Finally these people came to their own country. Now this man had some good moose-hide clothes heavily decorated with heavy quill-work and fur trimmed. These people had never seen such clothes. When the party arrived at the Cree camp the husband hid a distance away from the settlement. There was a fellow who was cutting poles for the tanning post. The husband was afraid to move, even when he saw the man with a big as running toward him. He was sure that these were not the people who had captured his wife because the woodcutter was a white man. The white man began to cut down a tree near where the Grand Lakes was hiding. The latter was afraid to move, not knowing who this man might be. The tree proceeded to fall straight down toward where the husband was hiding. If it fell on him, he decided, he would run away. The tree began to fall on the Indian so he jumped up. Now the white man saw him. He saw the good clothes and he wondered where they had come from, knowing that such things were lacking in this country. He talked to the Indian. "Where did you come from?" The Grand Lakes understood. "You are not from this country. These clothes are too good for this country. I never saw anything like that before. You stay here. I'll go and tell the boss that I found somebody with good clothes. Don't move."

The man remained where he was while the other fellow told the boss. The boss came out and asked the stranger, "Where are you from?" The man told him. The boss invited him to stay and offered tobacco. The Grand Lakes had never tasted tobacco but now he learned how to smoke. At first he did not like the taste. Then the white man gave him a gun and taught him how to shoot. The husband stayed for a while but finally returned to his own country with gun, ammunition, and tobacco. But he lost his wife.

He came to his own country knowing where the people would be in the late fall. The last night he moved a little. The husband was looking for his brother and father. The brother was not hunting and

* The neighboring Tahltan fought with the Tlingit, Upper Stikine, Taku, and Sekani Indians using skin armor and helmets of thick goat skin. They sought scalps as well as women prisoners. The Tahltan sometimes released captives in return for a ransom. Quimsan, *Indians of Canada* [1952, 37]; Teit, *the Tahltan* (*Abstracts*) *Work* [1912, 165]. A local informant corroborated the information that the Tahltan sought their enemies. According to George Adolf these Indians also scouted war leaders.

* For a thumbnail sketch of the informant see Honigmann, *Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Nelson Slave* (1946), 16.